

What Patients Can Do To Help Prevent Infections

To prevent *all* infections:

- If you do not see your healthcare providers clean their hands before caring for you, don't be shy about asking them to do so. This is your healthcare, and you have a right to speak up!
 - Make sure you and your family members and friends keep their hands clean too!
- Ask your healthcare provider what specific steps s/he takes to prevent infections as well as what you can do to prevent infections before, during, and after your visit as it applies to your care.

To prevent central line-associated bloodstream infections (CLABSI) and catheter-associated urinary tract infections (CAUTIs):

- If you have a central line or urinary catheter put in place, ask your doctors and nurses to explain why you need it and how long you will have it.
- Ask your healthcare providers each day if you still need it.
- If the bandage covering your central line becomes wet or dirty, tell your nurse or doctor immediately.
- Tell your nurse or doctor if the area around your central line or catheter is sore or red, or if you feel feverish.
- Follow your healthcare providers' instructions for the care of the central line or urinary catheter to keep it working as it should and keep it clean and free of germs.
- Do not let family and friends touch the central line tubing or bandage.

To prevent surgical site infections (SSIs):

IMMEDIATELY AFTER YOUR SURGERY AND DURING RECOVERY:

- Avoid touching your incision area and follow all instructions from your doctor about how to take care of your incision.
- Before and after taking care of your incision area, wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer and have any family member helping with your care do the same.
- If you have any signs or symptoms of an infection like redness, pain, fever, or drainage, call your doctor *as soon as possible*.
- Until the incision is completely healed, always use a different washcloth for the incision area than the one used for the rest of your body.
- Keep clean sheets on your bed and make sure the clothes that come in contact with your incision are clean.
- Keep pets away from the incision until healed.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE HOSPITAL OR AMBULATORY SURGERY CENTER:

- Make sure you understand how to take care of your wound and ask questions when you are unsure.
- Know who to contact if you have questions or problems after you get home.
- Keep all appointments scheduled at the time of discharge.

To prevent *Clostridium difficile* infections:

- Take antibiotics only as prescribed by your doctor and complete the course of treatment.
- Tell your doctor if you have recently been on antibiotics or if you get diarrhea within a few months of taking the antibiotics.
- Wash your hands before eating and after using the bathroom.

To prevent methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) infections:

- Wash your hands often, especially before and after changing wound dressings or bandages.
- Keep wounds clean and change bandages as instructed until healed.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels or razors.
- Take antibiotics only as prescribed by your doctor and complete the course of treatment.

To prevent influenza or the “flu”:

- Get vaccinated against the flu each year.
- Wash your hands often.
- Cover your cough with your sleeve.